



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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For Immediate Release

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EOC releases report on 4K child development program

Editor's Note: Copies of both the "*Evaluation Report on the Implementation and Expansion of the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)*," "*Summary Report on the Implementation and Expansion of the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)*," and working documents can be found online at www.eoc.sc.gov.

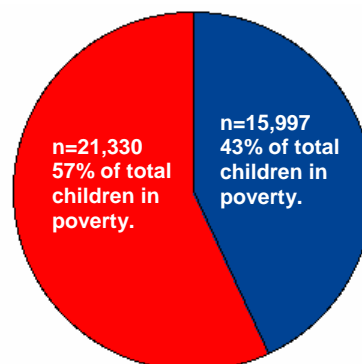
Columbia – The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) today released a report evaluating the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), a two-year program designed to provide high-quality, full-day four-year-old kindergarten programs for at-risk children. The program focuses on children living in the 37 plaintiff districts represented in *Abbeville County School District et al. vs. SC*.

According to the report, which was prepared by a team of USC researchers and EOC staff at the request of the South Carolina General Assembly, the total number of four-year-old students served in both public and private CDEPP settings has increased since the first year of the pilot. Additionally, 57 percent of the estimated population of four-year-olds eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch and/or for Medicaid statewide are being served by a publicly-funded pre-K program. The South Carolina Department of Education is responsible for implementation of CDEPP in public schools; Office of First Steps implements the program among private providers.

According to David Potter, EOC Director of Research, the data in the report show that the program is making a difference in the lives of at-risk children.

"The program is making positive changes," stated Potter, "however, maintaining quality throughout the programs is necessary as the program expands."

SC four-year-olds in poverty served or not served, 2007-08 school year



- 4-yr.-olds in poverty served by publicly-funded pre-K program
- 4-yr.-olds in poverty NOT served by publicly-funded pre-K program

Children in poverty: four-year-olds eligible for federal free- or reduced-price lunch programs and/or for Medicaid services

The report provides detailed analyses on students, teachers, and providers as well as an examination of facilities, financial records, administration, and teacher credentials.

Highlights of the report include:

- Based on student enrollment data for 2007-08, 3,756 children were served in public schools through the CDEPP program (an increase of 993 children from 2006-07). In private centers, 402 children were served (an increase of 93 children from 2006-07.)
- In the 37 plaintiff school districts, it is estimated that 2,256 eligible four-year-olds are not currently being served in a publicly-funded pre-K program.
- There are significant administrative costs incurred by both the State Office of First Steps and the SC Department of Education.
- The SC Department of Education, which is responsible for CDEPP implementation in the public schools, is projected to expend \$17.1 million in FY 2007-08, 100 percent of the total appropriation.
- In the current fiscal year, the Office of First Steps is projected to expend \$2.5 million of their \$7.9 million appropriation, leaving a projected surplus of \$5.4 million.
- According to a facilities inventory of CDEPP sites, public schools serving CDEPP children were at or near capacity. In contrast, 23 percent of private centers responding to the survey indicated they could serve an additional ten or more students.
- The analysis of the *Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third Edition (DIAL-3)* results in 2006-07 suggests that the eligibility criteria for enrollment in CDEPP (federal school lunch program and/or Medicaid-eligible) are identifying students developmentally at risk for later school failure. Using the *DIAL-3*, additional students have been identified as at risk for later school failure even though they are not income-eligible.

A portion of the evaluation presents results of a provider survey administered in spring 2007. Overall, administrators involved with CDEPP report being satisfied. Based on results from the 2006-07 implementation year, Berkeley County School District chose to increase their implementation of CDEPP to all of their elementary and primary schools this year. One school in Berkeley County, Goose Creek Primary School, currently operates seven CDEPP classrooms and serves 135 children.

"The CDEPP program is worth all of our efforts," according to Dr. Mike Turner, Assistant Superintendent for Learning Services in Berkeley County School District. "The benefits of a full-day program to poor youngsters are undeniable."

Turner reports that Berkeley County School District is serving approximately 840 at-risk four-year-olds. He is confident that the school district will see a return on their investment in CDEPP down the road.

"We put a lot of faith in the research that affirms that what these children learn now will have long-term effects," stated Turner.

These optimistic views are shared by private providers. Ms. Jacqueline Troy-Johnson, Director of Troy-Johnson Learning Center in Mullins, is pleased to see the children she serves "gain so much academically." The center serves 13 CDEPP-eligible children.

Ten recommendations are included in the report for "improving the implementation and administration of CDEPP and for expanding the program statewide in the future." The recommendations follow:

1. CDEPP should be continued in Fiscal Year 2008-09 and expanded beyond the plaintiff and trial districts pending the availability of state funding. The expansion should be phased in to districts based on poverty level.

2. The continued use of public and private providers is essential to the future expansion of the program.
3. The eligibility requirements should be amended to include not only children who qualify for the free and reduced-price federal lunch program and/or Medicaid but also children who score below the 25th percentile level on *DIAL-3* or a comparable and reliable screening assessment.
4. Continuation and expansion of CDEPP requires better data collection not only for evaluation purposes, but also to improve the administrative and financial accountability of the program.
5. The General Assembly should require financial accountability controls similar to those in Georgia, which has a universal 4-K program, for all providers participating in CDEPP.
6. The current CDEPP teacher qualifications should be continued.
7. The current per-child reimbursement system should be amended prior to statewide implementation of the program. The reimbursement per child would reflect a higher per child rate for teachers who earn and maintain early childhood certification and four-year degrees beyond the minimal requirement of a two-year associate degree. The per-child rate should be based on a minimum class size, with the inclusion of waivers for centers in rural areas of the state.
8. Given the need to provide on-going technical assistance and professional development to CDEPP teachers, state administrators of the program should develop and publish an annual technical assistance and professional development plan that includes methods to directly evaluate implementers' and participants' professional support for CDEPP personnel.
9. At a minimum, no provider should receive funds to equip a new classroom unless the provider continuously enrolls a minimum of five CDEPP children in the school year.
10. Based on the initial implementation of CDEPP, one state agency or office should be accountable for the administration and implementation of CDEPP.

The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.

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